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RIVER DELL CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE HUMANITIES, ORADELL, NEW JERSEY.
RIVER DELL REGIONAL SCHOOLS, ORADELL, N.J.

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A PROGRAM BEING DEVELOPED FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE HUMANITIES IS DESCRIBED. THE PROGRAM GREW OUT OF THE NEED TO GATHER AND DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GREAT IDEAS OF MAN--THE PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, ART, ARCHITECTURE, AND MUSIC OF PEOPLES IN EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA, AND THE AMERICAS. THE PROGRAM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN FOUR STAGES--(1) CREATION OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSE FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, (2) INTRODUCTION OF A HUMANITIES APPROACH TO TEACHING ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADES IN THE ENGLISH, HISTORY, LANGUAGE, MUSIC, AND ART DEPARTMENTS, (3) DEVELOPMENT OF INSERVICE COURSES, AND (4) INFORMATION DISSEMINATION OF THE PROGRAM TO SERVE AS A MODEL AND GUIDE. INCLUDED IN THE REPORT ARE DESCRIPTIONS OF (1) PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, (2) GOALS OF THE PROGRAM, (3) PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM, (4) MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT, (5) STUDENT GROUPING AND LEVELS OF INSTRUCTION, (6) LARGE GROUP INSTRUCTION, AND (7) A TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT. (RS)

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A program for the promotion of the Humanities is being developed here at the River Dell Regional Schools under the auspices of a Title III E.S.E.A. grant from the Federal government. The program, planned to come to full fruition over a five-year period, is to be implemented in four stages.

The Program

First: A separate, interdisciplinary course in the Humanities will be created and offered to all seniors as an accepted substitute for the traditional senior year of English.

Second: A Humanities approach to teaching will gradually be introduced within all four high school grades in the English, history, foreign language, music and art departments.

Third: In-service courses to train faculty members for this program will be developed for teachers in the River Dell System and extended or offered to other teachers in the county.

Fourth: The program will be publicized as a model for observation, and teaching guides will be developed for distribution and adoption.

Need for Such a Program

The Humanities Center being developed at River Dell has had its roots in countless discussions held among faculty members for the past several years. River Dell staff members have long observed that information about the great ideas of man, the philosophy, religion, art, architecture and music of peoples not only in Europe and America, but also in Asia, Africa and South America, is not available in any coherent or regular way to the average student within the usual school curriculum. The emphasis on science and mathematics, which cannot be neglected in today's world, has tended to eliminate elective opportunities for studies in the arts. We therefore believe it is important to introduce a wholly new curricular approach to the teaching of those subjects in the humanities which are the normal curricular requirement (English, history, foreign language) and which will lend themselves to the introduction of arts studies within their regular programs. At the same time, we plan to introduce a truly interdisciplinary Humanities Course to our more mature students, the seniors, in an effort to fill this serious cultural vacuum. The humanities approach to teaching within subject areas is designed to give students a body of historical knowledge about the growth of the arts. The Humanities Course will build on this knowledge by introducing interpretation and evaluation in terms of man's philosophical development and psychological makeup.

History of the Program's Development

Concern for the increasing emphasis on science and mathematics and the resulting de-emphasis in humanistic studies resulted four years ago in the creation of an Arts Committee at River Dell. The committee was charged with the task of finding ways to involve more of our students in music and art experiences without doing

violence to their other studies. A proposal to introduce such experiences into the history curriculum met with reluctant rejection, since very few history teachers are equipped to teach in these areas, and funds could not be found to mount the necessary in-service programs to train the staff for this purpose. Stop-gap efforts to offer music and art in two-day-a-week electives to make them available to more students met with modest but limited success.

The following year, a partial humanities approach was introduced into one English class, which used a variety of readings on a single theme as a framework for its lessons. While this course continued successfully for two years and called itself a "Humanities Course," it was in no way interdisciplinary.

Members of the Arts Committee began to insist that a truly interdisciplinary course could only be attempted if the excellences of several staff members were utilized in a team teaching effort. A decision was reached to try out the team teaching methodology in the eleventh grade history curriculum this year. This team teaching venture is proceeding very successfully at the present time.

A further experiment in the development of a future Humanities Course was conducted last year in a series of independent lectures presented once a week to a small group of seniors. These lectures displayed the individual talents and special information of many faculty members, developed around the general theme, "Man's Reaction to His Environment." The trials and errors in each presentation contributed greatly to our understanding as a faculty of "what to teach " and the need for breakdown into small groups, time for students to study each subject, and a more thorough thinking-through of course content.

Aims and Goals of the Humanities Program

1. Humanities Course

The course to be developed for seniors will replace English in the senior year for those students whose mechanical skills do not need remedial attention. The course will be planned to give some insight into the development of human ideas in a variety of cultures, including a truly interdisciplinary view of man's interpretation of his environment through philosophy, religion, government, art, music, architecture and literature. We strongly believe that such a course may help to solve a growing problem in American education which, in its effort to cope with the knowledge explosion, all too often loses sight of the meaning behind the facts being presented. The most dangerous thing a civilization can do is to develop highly trained specialists, scientists and technicians who are not equally provided with insight into the workings of men's minds and the forces of society. A narrow education in the conventions developed by our own culture will not help us to understand, for instance, the ancient and very real differences which characterize the emerging Asian and African peoples. We propose to develop a course which will consider the growth and development of such basic ideas as government, law, religion, morality, and the place of man in the universe, as they have been expressed in a variety of cultures through the religion, social structure, buildings, paintings, music and literature of their people. Such a course at the high school level is not intended as the final word for our students. Rather, its purpose is to open eyes and whet student appetites for more information; our primary goal in offering the specific Humanities Course is to attempt to induce a humanities mentality in the

students here at River Dell, in students who will attend from parochial schools, and in the community at large, hoping that our efforts will stimulate the participants to continue to read, look, listen, and think in other than mechanistic ways as they mature.

2. Curricular Revision

The second aspect of the proposed Humanities Program will affect a major part of the curriculum and will involve the retraining of existing personnel. Students in high school today must take science, mathematics, English, history and a foreign language. Courses in music or art per se are all but crowded out of the curriculum, and there seems little that can be done to relieve this scheduling problem. We propose, therefore, to introduce a humanities approach within each departmental area of history, English, foreign language, music and art, in grades nine through twelve. That is to say, in a history class, for example, the music, art, architecture and philosophy of a period under discussion will be brought into the classroom to reinforce the understanding of the political and economic study which is the normal content of the course. The purpose of this new emphasis is to bring information to all our students in the arts which they are unable to acquire at the present time, and to provide a new dimension of meaning to history.

Planning

During the summer of 1966, the six faculty members who are currently teaching the Humanities classes met together daily for six weeks. Their sessions led to the development of the experimental syllabus now in use, but further refinement of this course of study will be effected during the course of the present year.

The summer planning session included a thorough study of courses of study gathered from other humanities programs offered throughout the country. Team members also consulted with Dr. Leroy Buckingham who teaches an interdisciplinary humanities course at New York University and who helped to focus the direction of their thinking.

At the conclusion of the planning session, the course of study developed was submitted to Dr. Charles R. Keller, director of the John Hay Fellows Program, for his suggestions and approval.

Implementation

The course being offered to seniors at the River Dell Senior High School uses a team approach to instruction. The Chairmen of the English, Art, and Music Departments, and teachers of history and English are members of the team which is coordinated and directed by the chairman of the Library Department. Large group instruction is held at least once a week, and breakdown into small groups for reinforcement of the lecture, writing, discussion and independent study occupy the remaining three or four days of the week.

Each day following the class session, members of the team meet together in a planning session to discuss progress and review the content of the lessons. These planning sessions are vital to the development of the syllabus and the eventual evaluation of each component in the course of study.

Materials and Equipment

1. Audio-Visual Equipment

Large group instruction requires a variety of audio-visual equipment in good working order, including projectors for films, slides and transparencies; tape recorders, phonographs; lecterns; screens; microphones and amplification systems. In addition, projection equipment must be available in sufficient quantity to supply each of the individual classrooms for small-group work.

2. Library

Independent readings, viewing, and listening require the resources of a well-equipped library with enough space for undisturbed use of such resources. River Dell is in the process of building such a library which will be the nucleus of the Humanities Center sponsored by the federal grant.

3. Large Group Room

While most schools have an auditorium in which large group instruction can be conducted, such an area is usually ill suited to a group which wishes to take notes and which seems uncomfortably lost in a large hall of this type. Ideally, a large-group instruction room with chairs designed for writing should seat no more than 150 and thus have the necessary sense of intimacy between teacher and students which exists in a regular classroom.

4. Text Books

Since the Humanities Course has no text book, great reliance is placed on the use of paperback books which are issued as texts. As many as ten such books have been issued to students in this course, but the cost has only slightly exceeded equipping students with an expensive hard-cover text such as they would have received in their English courses. It is expected that these paperback books will not last more than five years, but that they will last for this long.

Student Grouping and Levels of Instruction

It is the philosophy of the River Dell program that the Humanities Course has value for students of all levels of ability. The program has therefore been made available to all students rather than to an elite few. At the present time there are 141 students in the program including six who attend from the Bergen Catholic High School. While all students meet together in the large groups for the major lectures, ability levels are maintained within the individual class groups so that each student has his place in a group of his intellectual peers.

Since the Humanities Course replaces English on the twelfth grade level, extensive opportunities are provided for students to write so that assignments of this nature may be perused for structural and mechanical form as well as for content.

Large Group Instruction

Large group sessions, which include all of the Humanities classes, are scheduled so that a speaker, expert in his field, may relate ideas in his specific discipline. Class sessions, which include only the class members and instructor, meet after each large session to synthesize the concepts related in large group sessions so that these concepts fall neatly into the general frame of reference. The fervent hope is to produce at the close of the academic year a concatenation of ideas, each, when added to the whole, produces a required part of that whole.

To produce this result, a team approach is required. Each member of the team serves not only as the expert in his field, but as a class instructor as well. The team is comprised of a teacher of English, history, art, and music. In addition, a full time librarian maintains the mass of books and audio-visual aids required by teachers and students to enrich their offerings. An audio-visual aids expert provides and maintains equipment necessary to the program's offerings. Philosophically then, each person, representing his discipline academically, recognizes that his role is merely a part of the whole.

Tentative Outline of Course Content

Since our program is intended to be flexible and experimental, the content of the course is subject to change in the intellectual spirit it intends to purvey. The general structure of the course is planned to bring forth discussion which will reveal the student to himself and help place him in his environment.

I. Man and His Gods
   - A. Anthropological view of selected tribes (Patterns of Culture - Benedict)
   - B. Early ideas of God: multiple deities, magic, animism
     1. Primitive art and religion
     2. Primitive music as a function of religion
   - C. Greek mythology
   - D. Norse mythology and other mythic systems
   - E. Greek attitudes of fate as related in tragedy
     1. Oedipus Rex
     2. Prometheus Bound
     3. The Bacchae
   - F. Oriental religions and society
     1. Oriental religious ideas as expressed in eastern art
     2. Oriental culture as interpreted through architecture
   - G. Concepts in Judeo-Christian thought
     1. Genesis, The Book of Job
     2. MacLeish: J.B.

H. Death and immortality as expressed through music

I. Architectural manifestations of religious ideas: the cathedral

II. Man and Society

A. Early social institutions
   1. Greek
   2. Roman
   3. Oriental

B. Classicism as a manifestation of the social ideal
   1. Music - the sonata
   2. Architecture - the Parthenon
   3. Poetry- the sonnet

C. Utopia as a social ideal

D. Natural versus man-made law

E. War as a phenomenon
   1. Machiavellian man
   2. Expression of war in film: "Alexander Nevsky"
   3. Expression of war in music
   4. Expression of war in literature
   5. War as seen through the eyes of the artist

F. Human reaction in society
   1. The Individualist
      a. The Renaissance character
      b. Non-conformity
         1) As expressed in art
         2) As expressed in music
         3) As seen in literature - Hamlet, Faust

   2. The Romantic
      a. As seen in literature - Don Quixote
      b. As expressed in art
      c. As expressed through music

   3. The Conformist
      a. The city atmosphere
      b. The suburban atmosphere - Babbitt

III. Man and Nature

A. The role of science in the modern era - the knowledge of natural forces

B. Our physical environment
   1. The artist's view of nature
   2. Nature seen through the poet's eyes
   3. Music as an interpretation of nature

C. Industrialization as it affects the environment

IV. Alienation

A. The family as a basic social need
   1. Film "Mother Love"
   2. The family unit in literature
   3. Nostalgia expressed in music

B. Modern psychology
   1. Symbolism
   2. Influences of Jung in art

C. Alienation as expressed in literature
   1. The novel
   2. The theater of the absurd and its forerunners

D. Depersonalization in art

E. Electronic music

V. The Search for Lasting Values

A. Pragmatism as a philosophy

B. Twentieth-century man
   1. Present-day beliefs
   2. Is God dead?
   3. Needs of modern society